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Request for the inclusion of a supplementary item in the agenda of the sixty-first session

A proactive role for the United Nations in maintaining peace and security in East Asia

Letter dated 10 August 2006 from the representatives of Belize, the Gambia, Honduras, Malawi, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Nicaragua, Palau, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands, Swaziland and Tuvalu to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon the instruction of our respective Governments, we have the honour to request, pursuant to rule 14 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly of a supplementary item entitled "A proactive role for the United Nations in maintaining peace and security in East Asia". Pursuant to rule 20, we attach an explanatory memorandum (annex I) and a draft resolution (annex II).

We have the honour to request also that this item be considered under the heading "Maintenance of international peace and security".

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Annex I

Explanatory memorandum

A proactive role for the United Nations in maintaining peace and security in East Asia

In the light of the reform of the United Nations, all Members should cooperate with each other in enhancing the United Nations role in promoting peace and security. "Today, more than ever before, threats are interrelated and a threat to one is a threat to all." Indeed, peace and security in East Asia directly affect people's lives and property in the region, and are also closely related to international security and development. Recent developments in the region indicate that some of the area's problems and disputes have been escalating, which might have a serious impact on regional peace and stability. The United Nations, therefore, should adopt necessary measures to strengthen cooperation among all countries in this region in the fields of security, politics, the economy, culture and the environment. Such action would help to effectively resolve the existing problems and disputes, eradicate the roots of tension, and remove threats to regional peace and security deriving from those problems and disputes. The reasons for action are as follows:

1. **Sources and threats of conflict in East Asia still exist**

Rapid economic and trade development in East Asia has depended upon peace in the region, and whether or not growth continues relies heavily upon the maintenance of peace and security. However, long-standing potential threats to East Asian peace and security, which include such issues as ethnic tensions, historical hatred and territorial disputes, have not been properly removed, and some of them have openly surfaced. In addition, there are new factors for potential conflict and other non-traditional threats to security, such as competition for energy and other resources, terrorism and environmental degradation, which could trigger regional political confrontations and even military conflicts. While these are causing much uncertainty in East Asia, what concerns us more is that multilateral cooperation mechanisms in the region play only a very limited role in security issues, and have no function with regard to collective military security. Hence the region cannot cope effectively with the ever more complicated security challenges.

Regional flashpoints, whether it be the nuclear crisis in the Korean peninsula or the missile threat in the Taiwan Strait, are likely to deteriorate. On 15 July 2006, the Security Council adopted resolution 1695 (2006) to express its concern over the potential threat that weapons of mass destruction and missile tests represent for peace, stability and security both in the Korean peninsula and beyond. A similar missile threat that exists in the Taiwan Strait also deserves the equal attention of the United Nations. The People's Republic of China has deployed more than 800 missiles aimed at Taiwan, a number that continues to increase by around 100 missiles per year. This kind of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, missile deployment or test only worsens regional tensions. The United Nations should take necessary preventive and proactive measures to stop the current situation in the Taiwan Strait from deteriorating.

2. **Security in East Asia is closely linked to world peace**

Over the past few years, East Asia has witnessed some of the world's most vigorous economic development. There are 2 billion people living in the region, accounting for approximately one third of the world's population. The GDP of countries in this region accounts for one fifth of global GDP, and trade volume accounts for 20 per cent of the world total. Therefore, continued stable development in East Asia is beneficial not only to people's welfare in the region but also to prosperity and development around the world. However, the arms race that started in East Asia during the cold war continues into the twenty-first century, and East Asia is currently seeing one of the most rapid increases in military expenditure in the world. From 1988 to 2005, military budgets in East Asian countries increased by an average of 71 per cent, compared to an average decrease of 4 per cent in the world for the same period. In violation of the norms of nuclear non-proliferation, the nuclear weapon programmes in the Korean peninsula have caused alarm in countries of this region. The fact that the military budget of China has seen double-digit growth for 18 consecutive years, and that it exports military and related technology to other countries, is causing grave security concerns for neighbouring countries. China's militarization has created an arms race in the East Asian region that continues to escalate.

With the combined advance of both military and economic modernization, peace and development in East Asia have an increasingly significant impact on global politics, economics and security. In a time of increasing interdependence among East Asian countries, enhancing their common interests and solving disputes through peaceful measures and dialogue are important issues that are not only consistent with each individual country's national interests, but are closely associated with security and development internationally. Based upon this consideration, the United Nations should pay close attention and take the initiative in improving peace and stability in this region.

3. **Military transparency and confidence-building are important bases for international security**

Military transparency is a crucial cornerstone for building confidence and trust between countries, and helps to reduce mistrust and miscalculation. In view of the present security situation in East Asia, bilateral and multilateral confidence-building mechanisms among countries in this region are restricted in scope and limited in effect. The lack of military transparency in some countries makes security relationships among East Asian countries unstable and uncertain. For example, the opaque nature of military development in the Korean peninsula and China's military expansion are causes for considerable concern and doubt for other countries in the region. Concerned countries have urged China to make its military more transparent, and have emphasized that China should make it clear to other countries how and why it is expanding it military. Considering the regional instability in East Asia, most countries oppose the European Union's attempt to lift its military embargo against China.

The openness and exchange of military intelligence and information are essential in reducing international tensions and preventing international conflicts. In its resolutions 59/87 and 60/64, the General Assembly emphasized that countries should engage in meaningful dialogue to avert conflict, and confirmed that

confidence-building measures contribute to regional stability and peace as well as progress in people's socio-economic conditions. The United Nations, therefore, should be more proactive in encouraging and assisting East Asian countries to promote military transparency and confidence-building measures, thus ensuring that the security dilemmas and miscalculations that can lead to arms races and military conflicts do not transpire.

4. Peaceful means, dialogue and negotiation are necessary for the settlement of disputes

Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations obliges United Nations Member States to resolve disputes peacefully. Article 33 of the Charter stipulates that "the parties to any dispute, the continuance of which is likely to endanger the maintenance of international peace and security, shall, first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice". Therefore, any preparations or behaviours that would indicate an attempt to resolve international disputes by non-peaceful means defy the basic principles of the Charter and should be of concern to the international community. In seeking to prevent the use of force in resolving disputes, the United Nations should not only passively assist in avoiding use of force among countries in disputes, but should also actively encourage all countries to enhance mutual understanding and trust through dialogue, negotiation and cooperation. Then, peaceful means to resolve disagreements and disputes among countries can be found. In fact, it has been proved in practice that peaceful means and dialogue are effective methods for resolving disputes and ensuring peace.

The nuclear weapon development programmes and missile launches in the Korean peninsula are potential crises for regional peace and stability in North-East Asia. The international community generally considers peaceful means, such as negotiations, an effective way to resolve the Korean peninsula problem. The fact that the Security Council adopted resolution 1695 (2006) is an expression of the expectation that peaceful means and diplomatic measures can solve this tense situation. Moreover, member countries of the European Union, NATO and the G8 have all delivered statements to express their serious concern about the situation in East Asia and to condemn the recent missile testing in the Korean peninsula for gravely threatening regional security and stability. They have also emphasized the importance of multilateral mechanisms, such as international treaties, regulations and so forth.

Besides the tension in the Korean peninsula, the situation in the Taiwan Strait also deserves the attention of the United Nations. The People's Republic of China has conducted missile tests and deployed missiles along its coast aimed at Taiwan. In addition, China adopted its so-called "Anti-Secession Law" to emphasize that it will employ "non-peaceful means and other necessary measures" to resolve cross-strait disputes. Even its military, the People's Liberation Army, often simulates invasions of Taiwan in order to prepare for resolving Taiwan Strait disputes by war. Such behaviour not only accelerates tension in the Taiwan Strait but also threatens peace and stability in the East Asian region. Many countries, including the United States, Japan and European Union member States, have expressed serious concern and encouraged peaceful means, such as cross-strait dialogue, to resolve disputes. Nevertheless, despite the appeals of many countries for peaceful resolutions to

cross-strait issues, China still refuses to abandon its threat to adopt military means against Taiwan, thereby making the people of Taiwan live in constant fear and threatening regional peace.

On top of this, East Asia has been lacking an effective security cooperation mechanism, with the security environment becoming subject to an ever-increasing diversity of threats to regional peace. To counter this, only through mutual respect and trust can peace, security and common development be secured among all countries. In addition, the United Nations should unanimously adopt effective actions, while encouraging and assisting States in conflict to enter dialogue and conciliation. It should help alleviate tense situations through diplomatic means under the principle of insistence on peaceful settlements without any preconditions.

5. Maintaining peace and security serves as the aim of the United Nations and foundation of development

Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations clearly declares that maintaining international peace and security is one of the major goals of the United Nations. This can be seen from paragraph 1, which proclaims that a purpose of the United Nations is "to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace". Moreover, paragraph 2 states as a purpose: "to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace".

To celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, the 2005 World Summit issued the 2005 World Summit Outcome to express concerns over peace. Subsequently, on 20 December 2005, the General Assembly, acting concurrently with the Security Council, adopted a resolution establishing the Peacebuilding Commission, thereby proving once again that peace is the focal point of the United Nations in this new century. In pursuance of the principles of that resolution, the United Nations has the obligation to adopt the necessary collective measures to prevent and dissolve potential threats to peace and stability in all regions, including East Asia.

As peace and development bring hope for the well-being of all peoples around the world, they represent the two major goals of the United Nations and main topic of contemporary international relations. In the United Nations Millennium Declaration issued in September 2000, Heads of State publicly pledged to take "responsibility for managing worldwide economic and social development, as well as threats to international peace and security". They further clarified that this responsibility "must be shared among the nations of the world". The maintenance of peace is a prerequisite to development, and economic development is the foundation for maintaining world peace. In other words, peace and development complement each other. Therefore, while the United Nations set the promotion of economic prosperity, social development and human rights as the goals of the millennium, it should not ignore its own important role in international security and peace. As we review the international environment, we must acknowledge that all kinds of factors of conflict, such as ethnicity, religion, territory and resources, all form barricades to

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global economic development. The United Nations therefore should take concrete steps and measures to prevent and dissolve any possible sources of threats to security and peace.

6. **Maintenance of peace in East Asia requires the participation of every country in the region**

International peace is a complete entity and cannot be divided. Each and every country must bear its share of responsibility for stability and prosperity in the East Asian region. During the process of resolving disputes and promoting peace, any attempt to exclude the concerned countries, especially ones in dispute, hinders the settling of disputes between countries as well as the maintenance of peace and security. To assure the security and peace of East Asia, all countries in this region, including Members and non-Members of the United Nations, have the responsibility to fulfil the aims and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and every regulation of the Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. To settle international disputes in this region, dialogue and negotiation among the countries involved are necessary. The United Nations should, therefore, encourage countries in conflict to settle their disputes via peaceful means, refrain from any use of force or threat of violence, and avoid behaviour inconsistent with the Charter. In addition, for the endeavour of promoting the security, peace and stability of the East Asian region, the United Nations should ensure that each member of the region has the chance to participate. Only by this means can the prerequisites for mutual trust and communication among countries be created.

Annex II

Draft resolution

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming that maintaining international peace and security is its principal responsibility,

Observing the goals and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

Acknowledging that peace, security, development and human rights relate to and strengthen each other,

Emphasizing that the principle of abstaining from the threat to use force or the use of force, which are inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations in international relations, and the principle that international disputes should be settled through peaceful means must be followed,

Recognizing that the long-existing tense situation and continuing military activities in certain parts of East Asia impede endeavours to increase security and cooperation in the region,

Believing strongly that development within one country and between countries can be achieved only in an environment of peace, security and mutual trust,

Reiterating that broad conflict-preventing measures should be taken to eradicate completely the sources of armed conflict and political confrontation in the East Asian region,

Acknowledging that East Asian regional security cannot be partitioned and closely relates to international peace and security,

Believing firmly that all countries bear the responsibility of making contributions to peace, stability and prosperity in East Asia,

Calling upon countries of the East Asian region to engage in dialogue to increase openness, raise transparency and build trust, and, moreover, believing staunchly that such dialogues and measures may benefit the development of harmony among countries, and may make momentous contributions to the prevention of conflicts,

Encouraging the United Nations to take more constructive action to promote peace, stability, security and development among East Asian countries,

Decides:

(a) To urge East Asian countries to settle disputes through peaceful means and encourage concerned countries to take further steps in military transparency and confidence-building;

(b) To request the Secretary-General to adopt crucial measures, according to real needs, to ease tense situations, and, if necessary, to invite parties in dispute to provide an explanation to the Security Council or General Assembly;

(c) To request the Secretary-General to prepare a report on measures for strengthening security and cooperation in the East Asian region.

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